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ABSTRACT

The need for lifelong career development in Canada is becoming increasingly evident as more people switch jobs. To meet this need, it has been suggested that counseling services for adults should be organized in a three-tiered structure. Such a structure would ensure that individuals have access to a counselor in accordance with their level of need. The focus of the first tier of service would be on self-exploration and career assessment. There would be a guided self-serve information system to meet widespread needs. The tier would include coached self-help, computer assistance, needs determination, group seminars, and could include special needs clients. In the second tier, more in-depth assistance would be available, such as skill training and information on entitlements. The third tier would include individual counseling where the clients clarify their inability to do what needs to be done, evaluate career strengths and barriers, examine assumptions which affect thoughts and actions, as well as active intervention with third parties, and the coaching and mentoring of clients. All three tiers could be housed in one location or be provided geographically by various agencies in a municipality. In addition to serving adults in transition, this program could aid secondary schools. A three-tiered career development service could provide a full range of services. (RJM)

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A Three-Tiéred Model of Career Counseling Services: ERIC Digest.

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by Ralph Kellett and Stuart Conger

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ERIC CLEARINGHOUSE ON Counseling And Student Services

ERIC DIGEST

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A Three-Tiered Model of Career Counseling Services

Ralph Kellett and Stuart Conger

The increasing probability that the average person will have many jobs over a lifetime is accompanied by a growing recognition of the need for lifelong career development services. To provide a coherent and articulated system for career and employment counseling, it has been suggested (Premier's Council on Lifelong Learning, 1993) that counseling services for adults should be organized in a three-tiered structure. The argument for using such a structure is to ensure that individuals have access to a counselor in accordance with the individuals' level of need. Identifying needs and offering targeted assistance is at the foundation of a tiered organizational structure.

A three-tiered organizational structure for counseling would offer comprehensive service to clients of all ages and stages of career development. Services from all three tiers could be offered from a single Career Service Center, which may house the different services in one location, or be provided geographically by various agencies in a municipality. In addition to serving adults in transition, the Career Service Center would provide services to the secondary schools.

First Tier — Career Exploration

The focus of the first tier of service would be on self–exploration and career assessment. There would be a guided self–serve information system to meet the widespread need for occupational, educational, and labor market information. It would be the first stop for almost all clients who currently go to varied agencies for this type of information; such clinics presently strain existing resources which provide this service, mostly via individual counseling. Some of the occupational, educational, training, and labor market information that is required can be obtained on a self–serve basis.

Coached Self–Help

There are people who are not served properly by "self–serve" systems, and frequently the most needy clients are confused and intimidated by this kind of service. Therefore, it is important to have a coach to ensure that visitors can define what they want and then find it.

Computer Assistance

Many people who have little difficulty in working with a computer, prefer this mode of help. This is particularly true for clients who have developed a distrust of people in the helping professions or who have difficulty rising to the demands of interpersonal counseling. A computer system can undertake the role of performing "needs determination" interviews with clients. At the present time, Human Resources Development Canada has under development an Automated Service Kiosk (ASK) which will allow clients to explore four employability dimensions (occupational goal, training, job search and job maintenance). This methodology has great promise for first line delivery systems, and can provide a good alternative to the person who is reticent about talking with a counselor and who prefers to get started with a machine.

Needs Determination Interview

Fundamental to the first tier of service is the inclusion of a career needs determination interview. By assessing needs "up front," false starts and unnecessary steps are avoided. The needs determination will help the client to recognize the services available from or through the Career Service Center and to identify what steps need to be taken next. The career needs determination interview could be conducted by a counselor or by an "expert" computer system.

Group Seminars

Few clients receive group counseling, yet brief group career seminars or workshops may satisfy the needs of perhaps 75% of people seeking help. Group sessions cover the exploration of one's talents, the formulation of occupational goals, the examination of educational alternatives, the development of a plan, the learning of appropriate skills, or as a lead in to computer–assisted career guidance systems. There would be extensive use of group information and self–help sessions in the first tier of service.

Special Needs Clients

Special needs clients must be connected with the right agency at the outset of service delivery. In tier one, infor-

mation on entitlements for income support, housing, day care, and the like would be available from the center "coach" or from the computerized information kiosks.

Second Tier — Self-Exploration

In the second tier, more in-depth assistance would be available. A great many people want and need more than information about education, training, and the labor market. They need to clarify their ideas about their interests, aptitudes, and personality, and how these relate to education, training, and work.

Conger, Hiebert, and Hong-Farrell (1994) found that many clients, who initially requested career information, quickly acknowledged the need to take control of their lives and overcome their self-defeating thoughts and behaviors, to learn to cope with the "hassles" of trying to improve themselves, and to believe that they really can achieve something. Assistance may be given in small group training sessions. In some cases, guided group exploration might be appropriate. The small group work should focus on the development of skills necessary to sustain group members' motivation and overcome their self-defeating thoughts. Clients need actual skill training (demonstration, practice, and feedback, in addition to the discussion) if they are to learn how to implement the skills in their lives.

The second tier would also house entitlement officers who could handle enquiries and claims for unemployment insurance and social assistance, as well as information on other entitlements. There would be other specialized staff available to arrange testing or other diagnostic services, and to assist clients in getting placed in training programs. Some rehabilitation counseling could also be provided in the second tier of service.

Third Tier — Reaching Out

The third tier would include individual counseling where the client clarifies his or her inability to do what needs to be done; evaluates career strengths and barriers; examines assumptions which color thoughts and actions; lists ways of overcoming barriers and of using strengths; evaluates the alternative resolution against strengths, barriers, and values; and, states a specific counseling goal or action plan to which the client is committed and which focuses on a relevant career concern.

Another important feature in this tier of service would include an active intervention with third parties, and the mentoring and coaching of clients. Many people at risk do not have a friend who can help them through the difficult steps of actually managing their own careers. Few counselors reach out of their offices on behalf of a client to speak with family members, educators, agency officials, and employers. Counselors who have gone an "extra mile" for their clients by intervening with third parties have often found it to be the most effective and most satisfying counseling task that they have done.

Summary

The need for lifelong career development is becoming increasingly evident as more and more people switch jobs because of new forms of work organization, economic downturns, or technological changes. Many workers will become "portfolio people," frequently moving from one individual contract to another. Career counseling services generally have not been organized for the average citizen; services have typically targeted students on the one hand, or recipients of social welfare, unemployment insurance, and disability pension, on the other hand. It is now necessary to develop a system that will meet the needs of all people who want and need career counseling. It is suggested that a three-tiered career development service will provide a full range of services in a cost-effective manner while, at the same time, respecting existing jurisdictions.

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